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Conference to focus on reforestation after mining

Professionals from Appalachian states gather to observe research projects firsthand

PRESTONSBURG, Ky. (Aug. 3, 2009) – Can productive forests be re-established after surface coal mining in eastern Kentucky? This question and others are being addressed Aug. 4-6 during the 2009 Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) Conference at Jenny Wiley State Resort Park in Prestonsburg.

This year's theme, Forestry Reclamation Approach (FRA) in Action, promotes the planting of high-value hardwood trees on reclaimed abandoned and active coal mining sites in Appalachia.

Kentucky Department for Natural Resources Commissioner Carl Campbell said the conference highlights Kentucky's success at reforestation and focuses on current research. "While the department fully supports a property owner's right to choose the land use they want established on their land after mining, the natural resources department has promoted reforestation as the 'post-mining-land-use' of choice since the mid-1990s."

About 200 professionals from 20 states are represented at the conference. State and local government officials, environmentalists and industry representatives will visit active and reclaimed mine sites to learn about various research efforts, including:

- The University of Kentucky's (UK) hollow fill reconstruction project incorporating state-of-the-art stream reconstruction techniques with FRA grading and hardwood plantings to re-establish a headwater system.
- One of a number of bee yards established by an Eastern Kentucky University research scientist where honey bees are integrated back into the forest after surface coal mining.
- An active surface mine to view a live demonstration of the FRA - the loose dumping, minimal compaction and grading techniques necessary to ensure good forest growth on mined lands.
- An active surface mining operation where UK established a number of reforestation research plots 12 years ago that showcase the FRA.

- The UK research complex at the Bent Mountain surface mine site, near Pikeville, which focuses on American chestnut plantings, water chemistry research and FRA research.

In addition to field activities, the conference offers the opportunity to hear experts in FRA, watershed studies, wetland creation and restoration, and UK research/enhancement programs associated with reforestation.

ARRI is a partnership between the federal Office of Surface Mining and the seven Appalachian state regulatory programs in Pennsylvania, Maryland, West Virginia, Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio. The partnership promotes the reforestation of mined lands.

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